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REVIEWS

The Tariff in Our Times. By IDA M. TARBELL. New York: Macmillan, 1911. Pp. ix+375. \$1.50.

Miss Tarbell, who is recognized as an authority on several public questions, has been studying the tariff for several years and now gives us a most timely volume on that old yet ever new subject. She begins with the war tariffs and shows how reluctantly even Republicans voted for increases in the duties out of sheer necessity for more revenue. But by the time the war was over the people had become accustomed to paying taxes many times higher than they were in 1860 and the beneficiaries of the tariff had become so accustomed to its benefits that there was a regular "outbreak of protectionism" and the higher rates continued. For ten years and more the advocates of these rates felt it necessary to apologize for them and assure the public that they were temporary. Then the business man, who had secured what he wanted more or less indirectly and had kept himself somewhat in the background, came boldly into the open and took charge of the tariff making. From that day to this the whole history of tariff making is one of the bargaining of the special interests with each other for the plunder of a long-suffering public.

It is not meant by this to imply that Miss Tarbell has indulged in scare headlines about the robber barons and plundering plutocrats. Far from it. On the contrary she has given us a cool and dispassionate account of the tariff making for the last fifty years, an account which is little short of exasperating to the patriotic American because of the unmitigated selfishness which it reveals in the tariff beneficiaries. A friend of the tariff could write a different story and, by omission and suppression, set it in a better light. To prove the falsity of Miss Tarbell's account is another matter.

One of the most merciless chapters in the book is the last, which bears the rather innocent-looking heading, "Some Intellectual and Moral Aspects of Our Tariff Making." In this the author shows, with example after example, that the tariff has not done what its advocates claim for it. Having demonstrated the utterly indefensible character of Schedule K, she adds:

The doctrine of protection as well as common humanity and common-sense orders the gradual but steady wiping out of all duties on everything necessary

to the health and comfort of the people unless in a reasonable time these duties can supply us better and cheaper goods than we can buy in the world market. That time passed at least twenty years ago in wool, but Schedule K still stands.

The utter disregard of facts by the protectionist is laid completely bare. Commenting on the remark made by a foreigner that the chief obstacle to the making of tin plate in this county was the absence of cheap female labor Mr. McKinley said: "We do not have cheap female labor here under the protective system, I thank God for that." On this the writer comments: "And yet at that moment in the textile mills of New England, of New York, and of Pennsylvania, not only were thousands of women working ten, eleven, and more hours a day, because their labor was cheap, but thousands of children were doing the same."

With a merciless marshaling of facts Miss Tarbell once more explodes that oft exploded dogma of the protectionists that the American working-man gets the benefit of the tariff. After quoting the recent high priest of protectionism, Mr. Aldrich, to the effect that "Protective duties are levied for the benefit of giving employment to the industries of Americans, to our people of the United States and not to foreigners," she goes into the very citadel of the protectionists, Rhode Island, and shows that 86 per cent of the operatives in that state are foreigners by birth or blood. The inefficiency of protection is further demonstrated in the fact that, after one hundred years of application, 75 per cent of Rhode Island's population lives in rented houses. At the factory the operative must work under insanitary conditions, the situation often being worse than in unprotected England. His wages, from \$7.25 to \$15.34 per week, are so low that his wife and children must go to the factory to help solve the problem of buying food and paying rent on a wretched tenement.

This, then, is high protection's most perfect work—a state of half a million people turning out an annual product worth \$279,438,000, the laborers in the chief industry underpaid, unstable, bent with disease, the average employers rich, self-satisfied, and as indifferent to social conditions as so many robber barons. It is an industrial oligarchy made by a nation's beneficence under the mistaken notion that it was working out a labor's paradise.

The author and publisher probably will be glad to have their attention called to the typographical errors on pp. 191 and 203. The use of "whom" as the subject of a finite verb (p. 321) violates an old rule of grammar.

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